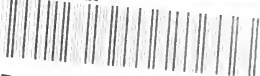
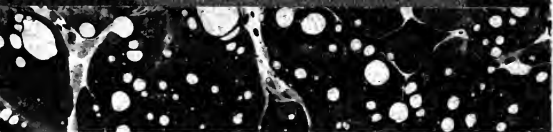


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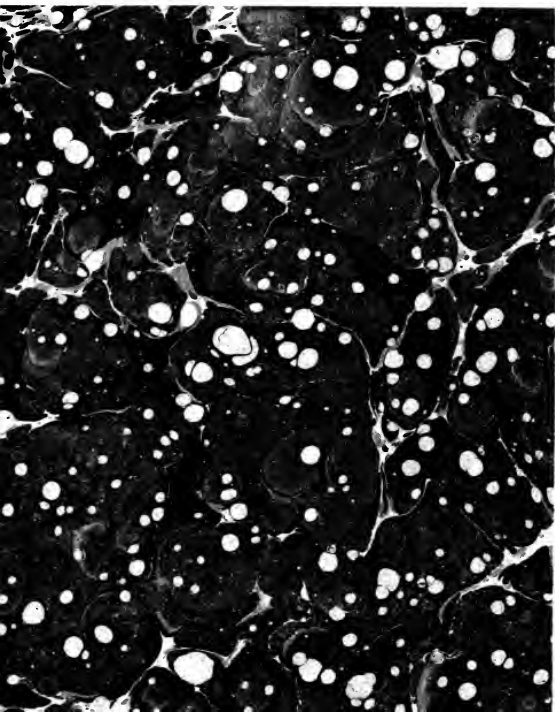


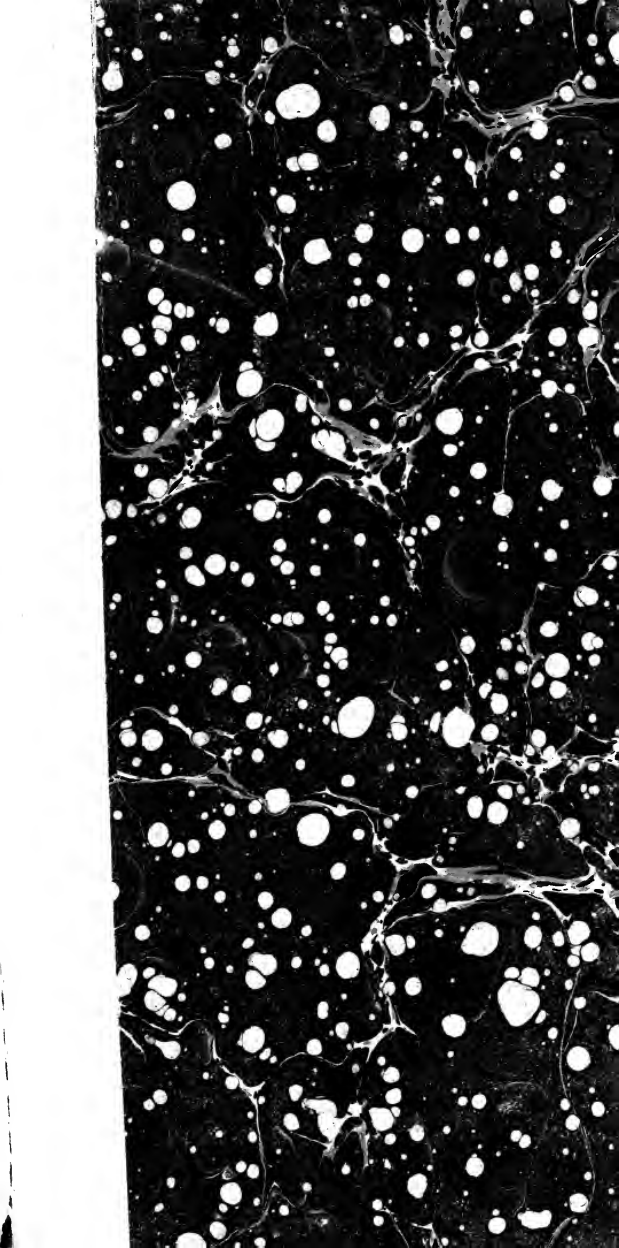
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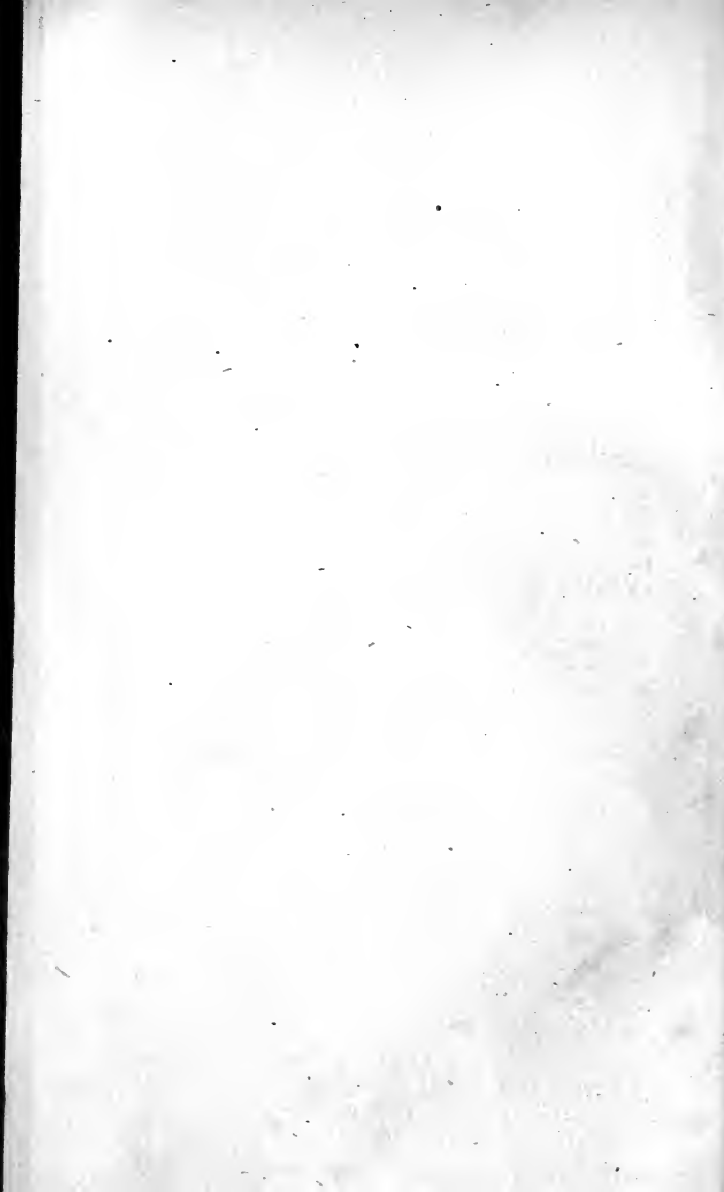


BY

REVEREND TIMOTHY BROSNAHAN, S. J

PROFESSOR OF ETHICS AND NATURAL LAW

AT WOODSTOCK COLLEGE, MARYLAND.



*The Courses  
Leading to the Baccalaureate  
in Harvard College  
and Boston College. . .*

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I.

The Harvard University Catalogue of 1898-99 contained a revised and authoritative list of institutions, the graduates of which are admitted without examination as regular students to the Harvard law school. From this list were omitted all Catholic colleges except Georgetown University and Notre Dame University. Graduates from these omitted colleges may, however, enter as special students, and may even obtain in due time the degree of bachelor of laws, provided they attain a standing fifteen per cent. in advance of that required of their fellow probationers from the listed colleges and universities. The only difference, therefore, between them and the favored students is, that of these latter a lower standard of scholarship is exacted, while the former are "required to obtain a mark within five per cent. of that demanded for the honor degree."\* And

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\*Harvard University Catalogue 1898, 1899, page 525.

if the matter rested here, the graduate of the proscribed Catholic college would have little to complain of, except the bewildering position of being complimented and aggrieved at the same time and by the same action of the Harvard authorities; and even this he might avoid by making his law studies at some other school. But from a newspaper interview we learn that "a professor, who is intimately acquainted with the management of the law school," alleges the inferior standard of studies in Catholic colleges as the reason why their graduates should attain a higher percentage in their studies at the law school.

There seems to be a want of coherence in this averment. This inferiority in standard of Catholic colleges, if it existed, would indeed be a reason for putting their graduates in a special class, and thus testing their aptitude to pursue a course of law. But why should it be a reason for requiring of these students attainments in legal lore fifteen per cent. in excess of that required of students that graduate from colleges of excellent standing? Usually a competitor is not handicapped because of his inferiority; at least he is given an even chance to prove himself. And if in the issue he shows himself equal to others, his inferiority to them is acknowledged to have been a

fiction. "*Tros Tyriusve mihi nullo discrimine agetur*" was Dido's rule of action, and it is a seemly rule. If students from these inferior colleges can attain the same grade of scholarship, measured in Harvard's terms of proficiency, as students from the listed colleges, then estimating a college by the result it produces, the normal intelligence will conclude that the low standard of studies in these Catholic colleges is equal to the higher standard of studies in the other colleges. This is surely a fair inference from muddled premises, for whose condition the present writer is not responsible. Yet none of this seems to have suggested itself to the legal mind of the professor. Those who devised this regulation had apparently some nebulous idea that seventy per cent. when reached by a graduate of a Catholic college, would be equivalent to fifty-five per cent. by the same standard of rating when reached by a graduate of an approved college. They judged that if two students started a course of study in the same school in which the method of grading or measuring progress was uniform, and the student whose previous preparation was inferior surpassed the other by fifteen per cent., then both these students were equal in proficiency; or, in other words, the same grade has different values as

applied to different students. The yard measure is rigid and elastic at the same time. Do these things cohere? It looks as if this differential duty of fifteen per cent. higher marks were imposed either to protect some infant industries or to kill off competitors. However, as the professor's assertion is the *gravamen* of the present paper rather than his incoherency, we may overlook his logic and concern ourselves with the truth of his charge. Is the standard of education in Catholic colleges lower than that of Harvard?

Some remarks from President Eliot enable me to define more closely the subject of my inquiry. Speaking of the omission of Jesuit colleges from the Harvard law school list, he said, in reply to some criticisms passed on him by a speaker at an alumni meeting of Holy Cross College: "No stated discrimination is made against these colleges, but in the list of over one hundred institutions, whose graduates are accepted without examination to Harvard law school, there is only one Jesuit college, namely, Georgetown University, near Washington. Holy Cross College, Boston College, and others equally well known are barred." What the President of Harvard meant by saying "no stated discrimination" is made against Holy Cross



College and Boston College is another minor difficulty of the controversy. Newspaper readers, however, to whom it was addressed, very probably understood it to mean that, in drawing up "the list of over one hundred institutions," the Harvard authorities did not positively exclude these two colleges, but simply failed to include them; that the omission of them, therefore, from the list was not a deliberate act of discrimination against two stated colleges, but merely the negative act of non-admission. In this sense the assertion, so far as it refers to Holy Cross College and Boston College, is certainly untrue. Both these colleges were in former lists. The omission of them, therefore, from subsequent lists is either an accident or a deliberate exclusion. As it has been declared with emphasis to have been no accident, the inference is unavoidable. They are not merely omitted from a list in which they never had a place; they are subjected to the invidious distinction of being displaced.

In the same interview President Eliot goes on to say, "I only hope . . . that the Jesuit colleges will be bettered . . . and that their standards will be raised, so that they can be put on the same footing with other institutions of learning." He was asked to substantiate the accusa-

tion which is the occasion of his hope or to make it definite, but beyond reiteration he refused to go. In a subsequent interview, speaking of the alumni of Boston College, he says: "They know very well why Boston College is not placed\* on the list of those colleges whose graduates are admitted to the Harvard law schools as candidates for a degree, and they know the only way in which their schools can be put on that list. It is for them to improve their course of study." Again we have the same unsubstantiated, indefinite statement, linked, moreover, with the imputation that the Boston College alumni are guilty of dishonest pretense in not confessing their inferiority. Regarding this imputation—I may say in passing—I hope the injustice of it will be made clear to intelligent and fair-minded persons after I have finished my treatment of the subject of this paper. The statement itself I shall endeavor to show is badly in need of proof.

Courtesy, fairness and self-respect, one would think, ought to have induced the authorities of the law school to state the reasons of their discrimination against Holy Cross College and Boston College,

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\*The question is not why they were *not placed* on the list, but why they were *displaced* from the list.

and to proffer, though unasked, a definite statement of the grounds of their action. If President Eliot were obliged to ask a student to discontinue attending Harvard College, he could not justify himself, should he refuse the demand of the student's father for definite reasons. He might find it painful at times to be compelled to assign these reasons; but he would scarcely fail to do so without an uncomfortable sense of self-disapprobation. How does he inwardly justify himself in excluding a whole class of students and refusing their Alma Mater "a definite statement of the grounds" of his action? Although in law, logic, and civility the burden of proving his accusation lies with him, he declines to accept it. The objects of his reprobation are thus placed in an awkward position. Those of them who are aware of the condition of affairs at Harvard may be amused at President Eliot's assumptions of superiority, but whatever value they may privately attach to his opinion, they cannot conceal from themselves the fact that, in the eyes of some, an extrinsic weight is given to his arraignment by the position he occupies. They must either refute the charges or else run the risk of being smirched to some extent in reputation. In view, therefore, of this state of affairs, I make President Eliot's

conduct my apology for giving to this paper a character which under other circumstances I should most assuredly not adopt. He has raised a concrete issue between Harvard College and Boston College. By meeting this issue I feel that I am, under the circumstances, not transgressing the bounds of intercollegiate comity, and that the judicious will not impute to me a spirit of litigiousness.

## II.

Our inquiry, therefore, becomes one regarding the relative merits of the courses of studies that are exacted of a candidate for the baccalaureate in Boston College and in Harvard College.

This degree had a well-defined meaning twenty-five years ago. It meant the liberal culture and intellectual breadth that came from the general and harmonious education of those faculties that are distinctive of man. If some students were found incapable of development except along special lines, then those students were considered incapable of liberal culture. They might be given every opportunity of becoming mathematicians, scientists, annalists, philologists, or what not, but they did not

receive a degree from a reputable college testifying that they were what they were not. The papers of citizenship in the republic of the liberal arts and sciences were a testimonial to liberal culture, to breadth of intellectual and moral refinement. Nobody then thought that "wood-working, blacksmithing, chipping, filing and fitting," even though they gave "distinct conceptions of precision," were of the same culture value as language, literature and thought. The theory of the equivalence of studies would scarcely have met with the recognition of ridicule. Within the last two decades, however, the meaning of the baccalaureate has notably changed. That degree is possessed to-day by men, who, a quarter of a century ago, could not have won it,\* men of a narrow and specialized range of information, of contracted outlooks, without educated facility of expression, and wanting in clear, logical grasp of thought. I make these remarks to forestall a very natural anticipation on the part of the reader, that I should first determine the meaning of the baccalaureate, before attempting to determine which institution conforms most fully to that meaning. As we shall see, that degree as at present conferred by Har-

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\*Compare Harvard Catalogues of 1869 and 1898.

vard has no fixed meaning. Like Prince Ahmed's pavilion, it is capable of expansion and contraction. It may cover little or it may cover much. It may be a vesture indicative of intellectual wealth, or at least of competence, or it may barely cover intellectual nakedness. Our only resource, therefore, is to prescind from what it should mean, and to endeavor to find out what it does mean. To accomplish this we must examine the respective courses of the two colleges, the completion of which will, after some formalities, entitle the student to call himself thereafter a bachelor of arts. An examination of this kind, to be exhaustive, should comprise four heads: (1) a comparison between the contents of the two courses; (2) an evaluation of the time employed in their completion, and the respective standards of attainments exacted; (3) the relative value of the lecture and tutorial systems for the formation of college students; and (4) the scope or ideal end to the approximate realization of which the two courses are directed. Whether President Eliot has decided that our inferiority falls under one or more or all these heads, I have no means of knowing. He keeps whatever thoughts he has on the subject to himself, and contents himself with enunciating the general thesis that our course

of studies is defective. I can only assume the worst. This I am justified in doing, because he uses no modifying clauses in his assertion, and though invited to define the specific form of inferiority that we are laboring under, has evaded the task of diagnosis. I shall, therefore, take it for granted that in his judgment our course is defective on all four counts, severally and collectively.

I shall be obliged, however, in this present paper, to confine myself to the first head only, and even under this head to omit from consideration two studies which are of incomparable value in giving breadth and unity to culture, namely, religion and philosophy. Neither of these studies is exacted at Harvard College as a prerequisite for the baccalaureate.\* A young man may graduate from that institution without any knowledge of general philosophical principles. Logic and the laws of thought may be as unfamiliar to him as the Devanagari alphabet, and the basic doctrines of rational psychology as unknown as the hieroglyphs of an Egyptian scarab. Even if he desired it he could find no course or set of courses among the twenty-three

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\*Harvard University Catalogue, 1898-99, pp. 274-281; and Boston College Catalogue 1898-99, pp. 47-53.

that are open to him to match the senior course in one of our Catholic colleges. Furthermore, he need hear nothing of the truths of Christianity. The courses on that subject were relegated to the category of electives, with the Birds of Aristophanes, geology, old Irish, and the dynamics of a rigid body, in 1874, five years after Mr. Eliot became president. Men may indeed differ about the dogmas of religion; but to make religion and morality optional studies at an age when they produce their most refining effects and are most urgently needed, is certainly carrying "electivism" to its limit. Yet out of the sixteen hundred and eighty-three undergraduates who attended Harvard's classes last year, only nine were found taking the two courses which have any analogy with the courses on Christian religion given in Catholic colleges. Is this education? It is certainly a malignant type of electivism. Apart from any question of religion, putting these two studies on a purely natural basis, the unity and consistency they give to knowledge, the training and culture they give to the mind, as compared with the disjointed and broken pieces of learning from which a Harvard student constitutes his curriculum, might justly be adduced to settle the question under dispute. But this aspect of the subject is very large



and very important. I have, therefore, determined to leave the consideration of it to a future paper, and to compare a segment of the Boston College curriculum with the full content of a Harvard elective curriculum. In so doing I work no wrong to our critic's cause, while I forego a decisive point in favor of my own.

The candidate for the degree of bachelor of arts at Harvard "must have passed in all prescribed studies and the requisite number of elective courses."\* Let us examine the content of these requirements, and contrast them with the studies exacted of a candidate for the baccalaureate at Boston College. Our examination will proceed more satisfactorily if we first compare the prescribed studies of the Harvard programme with the parallel studies of Boston College.

In the first place, what are "all prescribed studies" at Harvard? In the

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\*Harvard University Catalogue 1898-99, p. 440. A "course" in Harvard's nomenclature means the study of one subject pursued during the year for a prescribed time. For instance, plane and solid analytic geometry, taken for three hours a week during a year, would be "a course" in mathematics. English composition would be a "course" in English. A given subject in Harvard is divided into a multitude of such "courses," so that, for instance, a student may take a "course" in Latin composition without any reading of Latin authors.

catalogue of 1898-1899 they were three courses which are denominated English A for the freshman year, English B for the sophomore year, and English C for the junior year. No studies are prescribed for the seniors. Those non-descript individuals whose presence in the college, the dean of the faculty of arts and sciences tells us, constitutes a danger, are obliged to choose courses exacting attendance at lectures for twelve hours a week during the year, an average, namely, of two hours a day. English A is described as rhetoric and English composition, comprising lectures, recitations, written exercises and conferences. The value of the course may be estimated by the ground covered in A. S. Hill's "Principles of Rhetoric" (enlarged and revised edition). A clearer indication of its grade may be had from the privilege of omitting it, accorded to a freshman who had passed with distinction the entrance examination in elementary English.\* English B is a course in English composition. The student is obliged to write twelve themes during the year. Apparently this course does not differ substantially from the freshman course, as it is not prescribed absolutely for the sophomore student, but only con-

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\*Harvard Catalogue 1898-99, p. 276.

ditionally on his having failed to attain grade B (probably about seventy-five per cent.) in the English of the freshman year. English C is designated forensics. The student is required to make during the year one rhetorical plan of an argumentative composition in imitation of some masterpiece, and to write during the year three argumentative compositions called forensics, with rhetorical plans of the same.\*

Briefly, then, the only branch of liberal education prescribed for attaining the degree of bachelor of arts at Harvard College is English prose composition. Of poetics, of elocution, and what is vastly more serious, of logic, the candidate for a degree is obliged to make no study. It is true he may choose as an elective course one of these branches, but it is also true that he may not, and nevertheless obtain his degree. But this is not all. In the annual report of the president of Harvard College for 1898-99 it is proposed to reduce still further the prescribed studies in English. Hereafter the English of the junior year is no longer required; the English of the sophomore year is prescribed for those students only who have failed to attain grade B in the English of the freshman

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\*Harvard Catalogue 1898-99, p. 419.

year ; and the English of the freshman year itself is not prescribed, if a certain proficiency is shown in the elementary English of the entrance examination. In a word, the English required for graduation at Harvard has been reduced to the level of that possessed by a proficient high school graduate.

During our recent war we learned that the effective speed of one of our fleets was measured by the speed of the slowest vessel. And the minimum required for graduation measures the educational standard of a college. The intrinsic value of a given graduate's degree is the least for which it can be obtained. If his attainments are in excess of this minimum, they redound to his personal credit. If there are some students—and I should be sorry to believe that there are not—who practically recognize in their election of studies the need of a broader and more general culture in English than that prescribed for them, this only proves that their standard is higher than that of their Alma Mater, or rather than that of those who have in hand at present the educational destiny of that institution. For Harvard was not always thus ; we shall not easily forget some of the dearest names in American literature. Nor shall I believe that this narrow and meagre programme

is widely approved outside of President Eliot's circle of adherents.\*

With this programme we shall now contrast the programme of Boston College in the same matter. The English requirements run through the freshman, sophomore and junior years. There is no formal teaching of English in the senior year. That year has in Jesuit colleges a special scope, as I shall perhaps have the opportunity of explaining in a future paper. The English requirements for each of the three years named are, following the prescriptions of the *Ratio Studiorum* for language courses, classed under three heads: *instruction* in precepts, principles or laws, study of *models*, and *practice*, *i.e.*, in each year a course of instruction is given on a definite part of rhetoric; this instruction is illustrated

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\*The *Evening Post* of New York recently in an editorial gives an extract from a letter of Professor Charles Eliot Norton to the father of a young fellow countryman who was studying in Europe. "Tell the young man," he says, "to make his chief aim a broad culture of himself as a man. He is interested in Latin, you say, and means to make that language his field of work. Let him perfect himself in Latin, but warn him against the danger of becoming a specialist, who may be a fine Latin scholar, but not a thoroughly cultivated man. Our universities are suffering from too many specialists in their teaching force. What they need most of all is professors who comprehend the whole range of interests which constitute true culture."

by suitable English authors ; and finally with authors as models, and precepts as guides, practice in English writing is regularly exacted.

In the freshman year, for instance, the subjects of instruction are : in prose—the elements of style, the principles of the paragraph, and narrative and descriptive writing; and in poetics—the forms of versification. English writers of narrative and description are studied as models of these precepts.\* The practice consists of weekly compositions either in prose or verse. In the sophomore year the subjects for instruction are : in prose—the principles of invention, the amplification of the paragraph, complex description and exposition: in poetics—the development of imagination, and what may be called the humanities of poetic expression. The name *humanitates*, given to this class in the *Ratio Studiorum* sufficiently defines its aim. The models

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\* Genung's "Practical Rhetoric" is the text-book. I find in the Boston College Catalogue of 1898-99, the following models assigned for study in the freshman year: Macaulay's "Essay on Warren Hastings," Carlyle's "Essay on Burns," De Quincey's "Joan of Arc," Macaulay's "Essay on Boswell's Life of Johnson," Spencer's "Philosophy of Style," and Bacon's "Civil and Moral Essays." This list is of course directive, not obligatory. An individual professor may change it, provided he retains the scope and equivalence.

are from narrative and lyric poets and prose writers of essays. The practice in this year also is a weekly composition. In the junior year finally the subject for instruction is oratory, the laws of the art, and its divisions, namely, demonstrative, deliberative and forensic. The models are selected from English and American orators and from sources such as Milton's "Paradise Lost." In the first term the practice consists in analyzing masterpieces of oratory, and constructing rhetorical plans in imitation of them; and in the second term of writing orations with their plans on subjects generally assigned by the professor, and dealing usually with some topic of public interest. In poetics the elementary principles of the drama are the subject of study.

The difference between these two courses is distinct. The Boston College course is balanced, is progressive, and possesses that completeness which can reasonably be demanded of a college course. The question of its inferiority to the present Harvard College course may, I think, be safely left to the judgment of my readers.

## III.

When we come to compare the other studies in the two colleges, we find ourselves in the plight of a mathematician who is called upon to compare a fixed quantity with an erratic variable, the value of which, in a given case, depends on "the sanctity of the individual's gifts and will-power," and probably, too, on certain unholy proclivities to the venerable vice of backsliding. Whatever be the co-ordinates of this variable, it is certain that the novice freshman is, on the threshold of his college career, presented with about fifty studies in nineteen different subjects, on which he may regularly exercise his powers of election.

*Dep't* { Arranging these courses according to their numerical richness, German leads the list with eleven possibilities of choice, and English, history, music and others close it with one each. From this collection every freshman is required, supposing him to have passed the entrance examinations, to elect four full courses entailing twelve hours' class work a week. But he may not choose more than two courses in the same department. In Harvard, therefore, a student may, as a rule, confine himself to two subjects, taking two courses in each subject. He may thus during his four years eschew



the courses in twenty of the twenty-two departments into which the courses of instruction are divided. If mathematics is a bugbear to him, if the classic languages of Greece and Rome are to his American spirit foreign anachronisms, he may, in virtue "of the sanctity of his individual gifts and will-power," dismiss these subjects "into exterior darkness." Stranger still, when we recall President Eliot's misguided anxiety about the scientific poverty of the curriculum in Jesuit colleges, if the natural sciences do not jump with the humor of the Harvard College student, he may ignore them for four consecutive years. In Boston College the courses that lead to a degree are prescribed in languages, history, mathematics, the natural sciences and philosophy, save some minor exceptions in which alternative options are permitted. The first four of these studies are held to be complementary instruments of education to which the doctrine of equivalence cannot be applied. The specific training, for instance, given by the study of an oration of Demosthenes, Cicero or Burke, cannot be supplied by the study of differential calculus or the chemistry of the carbon compounds. A course in philosophy, including by that term logic, epistemology, general metaphysics and rational psychology, is believed to be the

necessary crowning of any system of education professing to give culture.

To make our comparison, therefore, I shall, after noticing the entrance examinations of both colleges, take what I have reason to believe are typical cases, what are at any rate legitimate cases of election at Harvard College, and contrast them with the Boston College prescribed course. And in order that this paper be not tiresomely protracted, I shall contrast the prescribed studies of the freshman year at Boston College with similar studies which may be elected by a Harvard freshman, leaving to the reader who has leisure and is not otherwise profitably employed the task of comparing other years. I shall then show that this hypothetical case of election is in content far in excess of what a Harvard freshman studying for the baccalaureate is required to choose. Regarding the entrance examinations of the two colleges, little need be said. The candidate for admission to Harvard is presented with two groups of studies called elementary studies and advanced studies, and is permitted to select the studies in which he will undergo an examination according to one of four plans. The first and second plans are practically the same and differ from the third and fourth in that these latter plans omit the examination

in either Greek or Latin. The Boston College entrance examinations are substantially equivalent to those contained in the first or second plan of Harvard, including, namely, the same elementary studies contained in the first Harvard plan, except elementary physics, and also from the Harvard group of advanced studies, advanced Latin, Latin and Greek composition (Latin F and Greek F of the Harvard Catalogue), besides solid geometry and elementary Latin verse-making.\*

Assuming two young men then to have passed this entrance examination and to have entered the freshman class, one at Boston College and the other at Harvard College, what are their respective burdens and opportunities? I shall tabulate the courses in the following order, premising first that in Boston College the organic unity of the language classes, as I have already noted, requires that instruction in law and precepts, study of authors as models, and practice in the use of the language studied co-exist in the same course, and secondly, that the Harvard freshman may not elect more than two courses in the same department.

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\* Harvard University Catalogue 1898-99, pp. 274-281, and Boston College Catalogue 1898-99, pp. 47-53.

I. BOSTON COLLEGE. *Greek*: (a) Plato's *Apology* and *Phaedo*, Herodotus' *History* (selections); (b) *Syntax* of moods and tenses; (c) *Greek composition* once a week.

HARVARD COLLEGE. *Greek*: (a) Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (selections).\*

II. BOSTON COLLEGE. *Latin*: (a) Cicero's *de Senectute et Amicitia*; Sallust's *Jugurtha* or *Catilina*; Horace's *Odes* and *Epodes*; (b) the elements of *Latin style*, the laws of *quantity* and *versification*; (c) *Latin composition* twice a week.

HARVARD COLLEGE. *Latin*: (a) Horace's *Odes* and *Epodes*; Tacitus (selections from the *Annals*).†

III. BOSTON COLLEGE. *Mathematics*: *Advanced Algebra*.

HARVARD COLLEGE. *Mathematics*: *Advanced Algebra*.‡

IV. BOSTON COLLEGE. *French*: (a) Racine's *Athalie*; Bossuet's *Henriette*

\* Harvard Catalogue 1898-99 p. 321, *Greek A*. That part of the Boston College *Greek* course contained under (b) and (c) is omitted from Harvard *Greek* course. It is practically equivalent to a half course, called in the Harvard Catalogue *Greek E*.

† Harvard Catalogue, p. 325, *Latin I*. The Boston College's *Latin* contained under (b) and (c) may possibly be a little more advanced than *Latin E* of Harvard.

‡ Harvard Catalogue, p. 361, *Mathematics D*.

d'Angleterre ; (b) Syntax ; (c) French composition once a week.

HARVARD COLLEGE. *French* : (a) French prose, historical and general; (b) practice in writing and speaking French.\*

If German is substituted instead of French a similar comparison could be made between respective courses in the two colleges. I have taken French, because it seems to be more popular with the Harvard freshman than German.

Now in instituting this comparison, I have been fair to Harvard. I have assigned my hypothetical freshman no course which has not been actually elected by some freshman for the year 1898-99, and have followed the regulation exacting four full courses, or "an equivalent amount of courses and half courses," and not permitting more than two courses to be elected from the same department. Nay, more ; I have been liberal. English history (important periods) and Christian doctrine, which are prescribed once a week each for a Boston College freshman, have been omitted from our side of the argument. Besides, I have assumed a very conscientious and industrious Harvard freshman, one whose election of

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\*Harvard Catalogue, p. 339, French 1 b; and p. 340, French 3.

studies is not made exclusively from the view-point of a lotos-eater. For instance, the Latin course I have granted to the Harvard programme is primarily not a freshman course. The Harvard catalogue informs us that it "is open to students who have passed with distinction in Course B or C." And in fact, of the four hundred and seventy-one freshmen that frequented Harvard's classrooms in the year 1898-99 only one was pursuing this course. Nevertheless, even with these indulgences in favor of our censor's position, one who is accustomed to evaluate educational programmes will not at the first blush apprehend the grounds of President Eliot's incorrigible certainty that Boston College should improve its course of studies. I have appealed to facts which may be had for the inquiry, and to which the attention of the Harvard authorities has already been called.

I shall make one comment on what this comparison reveals. The opportunity afforded a freshman at Harvard of electing his courses, combined with the restrictions imposed on him, frustrates the very object that it was intended to facilitate. It restricts the play of individuality. Let us suppose that a young man enters Harvard to get an old-fashioned liberal education, and that by some pro-

cess of reasoning he determined on a course in the classics similar to that found in the Boston College catalogue. He may have concluded not unreasonably that a knowledge of the Latin tongue and literature is an important acquisition for a liberally educated gentleman; as a result of his studious observation in the high school he may hold, with Professor West, of Princeton University, that Latin without Greek "can not be taught to best advantage"; lastly, he may think that the study of a language in fractional "courses" is an absurdity, and therefore maintain in accordance with the principles of the *Ratio Studiorum* that such study comprises instruction in precepts, study of models, and practice in use of language. If these are his ideals he is barred from their realization at Harvard by the letter of the law forbidding him to choose more than two full courses in any one department. He could not carry out his purpose without electing the equivalent of three full courses in the classical department. The sanctity of the individual's gifts must therefore dissipate itself over parcels of studies supposed to widen intellectual interest, but in fact conducing merely to variegated superficiality.

I might close my argument here. I have shown that the content of a Boston

College course is in no wise inferior to the course chosen by a Harvard freshman of more than average industry ; and I may justly demand of any honest critic publicly asserting its inferiority, either to prove his assertion or to withdraw it. I have presented my side of the case with evidence. If that presentation is fallacious, misleading, or erroneous, let its defects be pointed out candidly. Though not conscious of any deliberate intention to mislead, I am willing to concede that I may have erred. But I must respectfully decline to accept mere reiteration as either proof or refutation. Repeating a statement that has been controverted, without giving any indication that the arguments of the other side have filtered into one's consciousness, contributes neither light nor sweetness to a discussion.

Briefly, then, the state of the question is this: Since Harvard admits electivism and the principles of universal equivalence in studies, has it any logical grounds for declaring that this election should be made by the student rather than by the faculty? If out of the many combinations that may be made, the faculty of Boston College selects two or three which alone in its judgment ought to lead to the degree of B. A., the president of Harvard might disapprove of the exacting standard



set up, as being by implication—though certainly not intentionally—a criticism of his standard. But by no known laws of logic can he conclude that it is inferior.

This unreasonable position becomes still more inexplicable and unwarrantable, if the comparison is pushed further, if the Boston College freshman course is contrasted with other combinations of elective studies which suffice for a Harvard freshman. I indicate some of the possible combinations.

*History 1*, an introductory course on mediæval and modern history. Lectures three hours a week; no compulsory recitations, hence the most popular elective course in the college. In 1898-99 it was elected by over seventy per cent. of the freshmen. This is a full course.

*Government 1*, an elementary course on constitutional government. Lectures two hours a week, and recitations one hour a week. This is also a full course and ranks second in popularity among the freshmen.

*English 28*, a half course in English literature, consisting of lectures twice a week on the history and development of English literature in outline.

*Geology B*, an elementary course in meteorology, very useful, no doubt, in New England, where the weather is so inconstant. There were nineteen em-

bryonic weather prophets in quest of the baccalaureate in this class last year. It is a half course.

*French, 1 b*, French prose, historical and general. This is a full course, not reputed very onerous, except that it entails recitations.

So far as I can discern, these five courses, which are equivalent to four full courses, present a fair specimen of the work exacted of a Harvard freshman who is a candidate for the baccalaureate. Comment is superfluous.

Retaining History 1 and Government 1, which because of their undoubted popularity could not be dislodged without violating the sanctity of individuality, we might instead of Geology B substitute Geology A, which is a half course in geography, described as elementary physiography. Or instead of English 28 and Geology B, two half courses; a freshman may, if he has some proficiency in piano or organ playing, elect Music 1, which is a course in harmony. Again, if he should have a distaste for French prose, historical and general, he may substitute a course in general descriptive physics or an elementary course in experimental chemistry, which is denominated Chemistry B. In this latter case, however, he must also discard Music 1, because harmony and Chemistry B in the

examination and class scheme of Harvard, like the Jew and Samaritan of old, *non co-utuntur*. Combinations of this kind might be made indefinitely, varying, too, indefinitely in educational significance. Such sets of courses may be elected in accordance with no principles, possess no unity or coherence, look to no purpose outside the possibility of adjusting lecture hours to opportunities for athletic or other "wholesome delights of college life." Detailed comparison of school schedules are no doubt sometimes wearisome; yet I know no other way of showing concretely the actual value and practical consequences of what Dr. McCosh called "the large, loose, vague, showy, and plausible" fallacies regarding unlimited freedom in choice of studies, which have formed the one monotonous burden of President Eliot's messages to educators for the last twenty or thirty years. Reduced to practice—the ultimate touchstone of theories—they have made college education at Harvard a thing of shreds and patches, have deprived it of character and have made the recent Harvard degrees of B. A. symbols of an educational minimum.

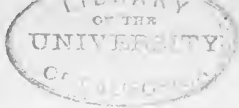
## IV.

The length to which this paper has grown compels me to abstain from any further comparison. But I assure my readers that similar parallels, even less corroborative of President Eliot's assumptions, could be drawn up between the studies of the other years in the two colleges, and in particular that the studies of the average senior at Harvard are little less than trivial as compared with those of the senior at Boston College.

President Eliot says in his Annual Report for 1898-99 : " Thus far Harvard has maintained the relative numerical importance of this traditional degree, better than any other American institution." He attributes Harvard's success or pre-eminence in this to its elective system. " It has been long the belief of the President," he says, " that to maintain the Harvard degree of A. B. in full vigor, it is desirable to broaden the range of well-taught subjects which will admit to Harvard College." There is something pathetically naïve in this last assertion. No dim suspicion seems to have entered the President's mind that his method has resulted in retaining the

degree of A. B. in full vigor only nominally, while he has wholly changed the content of the same; that he has kept the shell and bestows it at the end of three or four years filled with foreign matter. Yet he calls on the world to recognize the number of shells he produced annually, fancying that the world will be induced to believe the new stuffing is the same as the old kernel. If conferring degrees were a mercantile pursuit, this would be an indictable offense. It is paralleled by the trade transaction of selling oleomargarine for butter. The merchant may claim that his oleomargarine is better than butter—at least than some butters—yet the law obliges him to call his product by its right name. The dean of the faculty of arts and sciences at Harvard, in an article published in the *Atlantic Monthly* of February, 1900, complains of the confusion in the meaning of "liberal culture" due to the fact that technical schools "invaded the domain of the college" and "masquerade as institutions of liberal education." He says, "The visible traces of the struggle are with us yet in the curious assortment of degrees . . . bachelor of arts, of letters, of philosophy, of literature, of science, of what not, which decorate our college graduates, standing ostensibly for

so many supposed varieties of liberal culture, and giving currency and countenance to false and pernicious views of what liberal education is; for an education which aims to equip men for particular callings, or to give them a special training for entering upon these callings, however useful it may be, is not the liberal education which should be the single aim of the college." And yet the main difference between the degree of A. B. conferred under the ægis of "electivism" and the diverse degrees conferred in other institutions lies in this, that the degrees conferred in other institutions are significant of the studies pursued and the resultant training, while the degree of A. B. of Harvard may mean anything. If "electivism" is finally to characterize and distinguish American college education, would it not conduce to national honesty to acknowledge openly that the day of a liberal culture has passed, and that in America a college is a place where there are "a number of unconnected and independent educations going on at the same time?" What advantage is there in attempting to hoodwink ourselves and others by verbalisms, by telling us that a college is "a place where, though there are many paths, they all lead to a single goal," when the singleness of that goal



is merely nominal? It is nothing less than verbalism surely to fancy that you have the thing because you retain the name. Would it not be more scientific, less confusing, more in keeping with the purpose of an educational institution, which ought certainly to aim at fostering exactness of thought, to give new names to new things rather than to retain an old name and surreptitiously introduce a new, indefinite, and indefinable meaning? Confusing issues has never helped intellectual or moral progress.

"It is clearly impossible that the American university should be constructed on the top of the old-fashioned American college," President Eliot declared some years ago. Thereupon having proclaimed the clear impossibility, he set to work to destroy the old-fashioned American college, and on the débris to build his type of an American university. In place of the old-fashioned college, by gradual disintegration, he substituted a miscellaneous assortment of studies called "courses," invited young men to come and patch together, as it seemed good in their eyes, each his own curriculum, to pursue that curriculum with more or less devotion for three or four years, then to depart with the benison of his Alma Mater and an old-fashioned degree. If the defenders of

all this, while fostering for purposes of their own the educational superstitions of the educated masses, do not in their more cheerful moments, like the Roman augurs, laugh among themselves or in the inner recesses of their offices, they are sadly wanting in that saving quality of the American temperament—a sense of humor. And yet we must improve our studies according to the model that is shown us. What we want, in view of the partial exposition I have made of the Boston College curriculum, is a little less “must,” and a little more “why.” We can not accept an “*ex-cathedra*” decision on the matter. Former assertions of the president of Harvard regarding Jesuit schools have raised no presumption in favor of his accuracy. An hour or so spent in comparing the catalogues of Boston College and Harvard College, adding thereto some information which is the common property of any one about Boston, leads us to call in question the accuracy of his latest pronouncement regarding Boston College. While willing to admit that the course of Boston College—or of any other college—could be improved, we see no reason whatsoever for suspecting that it is in any way inferior to the collegiate course or courses at Harvard, and furthermore, we have solid reasons for believing that it is



superior—that it gives a true mental training. “At Harvard,” Dr. McCosh said fifteen years ago, “a young man has two hundred courses from which he may choose, and many of these courses I am compelled to call dilettante. I should prefer a young man who has been trained in an old-fashioned college in rhetoric, philosophy, Latin, Greek and mathematics, to one who had frittered away four years in studying the French drama of the 18th century, a little music, and similar branches.”\*

To conclude, then, we have been informed that a course in which philosophy, logic and religion form a necessary part of the curriculum is inferior to one in which these fundamental studies of a collegiate education must compete for the favor of a student with a course in music or with a course on the Life of the Ancient Athenians when illustrated with stereopticon views;† that an impoverished course in English with a young man’s patchwork of some three or four other studies is superior to a planned and sym-

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\*See a life of Dr. McCosh by Wm. M. Sloane, published by Scribner’s Sons, page 201. The whole of chapter XIII. is worth reading by any one interested in the views of a man combining philosophic grasp and practical ability.

†Greek 10, page 325, Harvard catalogue 1898-99.

metrical course in language, history, sciences and mathematics; and that this young man, after nibbling for four years at eighteen morsels of information on unmatched subjects, is by some cunning sorcery a better educated man than one who has been submitted during the same period to the discipline of a rounded formation. To ask us to believe this is to put too great a strain on our credulity. The categorical imperative: Let them improve their studies—loses all its Kantian vigor to compel obedience, when we reflect on the paltry character of the fragmentary parts of a subject that are dignified by the name of “courses” at Harvard, and attempt to compare four of these *disjecta membra* with the organic completeness of the Boston College course. Highly, therefore, as we regard President Eliot, we can not seriously believe that his convictions are the result of personal investigation without discrediting his intelligence. Nor can we entertain the thought that he deliberately intended to vilify Jesuit colleges. We shall await his proofs or retractations.



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